

11. Vocal music is taught at three of the four principal schools, and I am at a loss to understand why Greymouth should be the exception, particularly since there are amongst the members of the staff several who possess considerable musical talent. As far as I am able to judge, this subject was most successfully taught at Kumara. At Ross the singing was of the poorest description so much so that I regard the time devoted to it during the past year as practically wasted.

So few schools took up drawing last year that I did not think it desirable to go to the expense of having copies prepared for the examination. I examined the drawing-books at the schools where the subject is taught, viz., Kumara, Kanieri, Blue Spur, Ross, and Woodstock, and found some very creditable work amongst them, and I consider that the order in which the schools are named indicates pretty accurately their relative efficiency in this respect.

Military drill is taught to the boys of the Ross and Kumara schools. It had been discontinued for some time at Greymouth, but was resumed, at my request, shortly before the Christmas vacation.

In accordance with the regulations, all the girls at schools where sewing is taught were allowed to pass the standards with marks 10 per cent. below those required from the boys, after I had satisfied myself that the subject was fairly well and systematically taught, according to the programme. At Greymouth, however, where I found that sewing had not been taught during the first six months of the year, I allowed only 5 per cent., but this did not affect the number of passes.

12. The following are some matters in connection with the examination which I think it desirable to bring under the notice of the Committees and teachers. It is a common experience to find a child entered under one name on the school register, and consequently on the examination schedules, whilst habitually using another when heading the papers at the examination. This practice is almost entirely confined to the girls, but it gives rise to a considerable amount of trouble and loss of time. Leaving out the numerous diminutive and "pet" names, such as Tottie, Letty, Lena, Minnie, &c., which, however are sufficiently troublesome, it is not very uncommon to find a Christian name at the head of a set of papers, which has no place on the schedules. For instance, "Maud," after a patient but time-consuming search through the schedules of a large school, was discovered to be identical with "Emily" and one girl indulged in a totally different *surname* from that given to her in the schedule and on the school register. The attendance registers are, as a rule, carefully and neatly kept, but the columns for "Time since Admission" and "Standard last passed" are generally left blank. I found one case where a child aged four years and four months had been entered on the roll, and included in the return of attendance, and the teacher informed me that he had been told by a member of the Board that he could admit children of that age. The admission register is scarcely ever kept completely posted up. This sometimes arises from an imperfect acquaintance with the printed instructions which accompany each copy but more frequently from the difficulty often experienced by teachers in getting the required information from the parents. When this is the case, the child should be excluded until the form supplied (in this district) for the purpose has been correctly filled up and returned.

13. The following observations on the treatment, in this district, of some of the subjects of the syllabus may not be considered out of place here. Reading and recitation are as a rule fairly well taught, and there is a tendency to improvement observable throughout the district. I invariably notice that, where the reading of the First and Second Standards is well attended to, that of the upper classes bears witness to the care that has been bestowed upon it in the earlier stages. The most prevalent faults are extreme rapidity, a monotonous drawl, a very unpleasant dropping of the voice at every comma, and in a few cases a slavish and exaggerated attention bestowed upon punctuation, to the detriment of all expression. Judging from late experience, I should say that in some few of the schools too much dependence is placed upon simultaneous reading, which, although in many ways a most valuable exercise, should not be adopted to the neglect of individual practice. In large classes a subdivision into groups of not more than ten should be occasionally resorted to, as individual defects could then be more readily detected than when from thirty to fifty children are reading together. The quality of the recitation is usually about on a par with that of the reading. In both the excellences and defects of the teacher are invariably reproduced, the latter often in an exaggerated form, by the scholars. If a teacher have no taste for poetry himself, the recitation of his scholars will be decidedly inferior. In one school the teacher of which habitually disregards the aspirate, both in speaking and reading the sound of the letter "h" is scarcely ever heard.

14. WRITING.—This branch of instruction is more powerfully and directly affected by the teacher's example than any other. It may safely be asserted that, notwithstanding the universal employment of copybooks with printed head-lines, the writing of the scholars takes its character to a very great extent from that of the teacher. When the latter is invariably neat and careful in the writing he places before his scholars on the black-board or in their exercise-books, that of the children generally corresponds in character, whilst slovenly scribbling in either case will as surely be reproduced and intensified. The excuse generally urged for black-board scribbling is the desire to save time but the few minutes that are thus borrowed for the benefit of one subject, at the expense of another, must ultimately be repaid with compound interest if the ill effects of the practice are to be averted, and it should also be remembered that in the case of boys a good handwriting is frequently the only passport to success in after-life. The written examination-papers bear unerring indications of the amount of importance attached to this subject by the teachers. In every school there will of course be some children whose writing cannot be brought up to a satisfactory standard of excellence, and, with such exceptions, the handwriting of the paper work at the Hokitika, Kumara, Ross, Stafford, Paroa, Cobden, Donoghue, Upper Crossing, and Blue Spur, was, as it always has been with most of them, of excellent quality. At two schools the writing of the Second Standard was very poor, owing, if I mistake not, to the class having been left to the care of a young pupil-teacher whilst engaged with this work—a mistake which will cause great trouble in the future.